DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 987 EF 005 074

TITLE	A Guide to School Site Selection.
INSTITUTION	Georgia State Dept. of Education, Atlanta. Facilities Services Unit.
PUB DATE	1997-10-00
NOTE	6p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Facilities; Educational Facilities Design; *Educational Facilities Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; School Zoning; Site Analysis; *Site Selection; *State Regulation
IDENTIFIERS	*Georgia

ABSTRACT

This report presents the guidelines for site evaluation and approval as mandated by the state of Georgia. This guide may be used by the School Site Approval Committee when making school site evaluations for official approval, and also may be used by local school systems as they make preliminary determinations regarding the acceptability of school sites. The guide: (1) examines size requirements and provides minimum acreage requirements for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools; (2) describes the importance of utilities in a modern school plant and urges committees to make every effort to ensure access to public water and sewage services; (3) highlights safety hazards as a real concern and maintains that school sites should not be traversed by high-tension lines, high-pressure oil or gas lines, railroads, or other potential hazards; and (4) addresses the influence of environmental factors on student education and recommends school locations be insulated from business and industrial development. It is also suggested that although the site should possess physically desirable characteristics, it should provide convenient accessibility and be appropriately located with respect to other schools. (RJM)

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A GUIDE TO SCHOOL SITE SELECTION

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FACILITIES SERVICES UNIT
October 1997

EF 005 074

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FOREWARD

These materials contain information developed to comply with the National Flood Insurance Program Rules and Regulations and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-260(c)(4); § 20-2-260(c)(7); § 20-2-260(d)(6).

The form "Preliminary School Site Evaluation and School Site Approval," which is included, is designed for use by local school systems for making preliminary determinations concerning the acceptability of school sites. Also, it is for use by the School Site Approval Committee when make school site evaluations for official approval. Section VII of the form is for use by the School Site Approval Committee for approval or disapproval of a site. The form is available through the Facilities Services Section of the Georgia Department of Education.

Requests for site approval should be directed to the Director of the Facilities Services Section, 1670 Twin Towers East, Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5050, telephone number (404) 656-2454.

A GUIDE TO SCHOOL SITE SELECTION

A Good School Site is Important

A good, well-developed site and a well-equipped school plant functionally designed leaves little to be desired in the way of basic physical tools for education. Without one or the other the educational program may suffer. Current school programs include many activities that must be carried on outside the walls of the physical plant. Well-planned and properly developed outdoor areas are essential to support outdoor activities and to provide vehicular circulation and adequate, convenient parking and also be conducive to the safety of children. The site is an integral part of the total school plant and may enhance or inhibit the achievement of a school's educational objectives.

Environment is an influential factor in the lives of young children. Therefore, the school site should contribute positively to the health, safety and social aspects of a children's life at school.

Choosing a good site is one of the important early steps in overall planning. Success or failure in this initial step will be reflected in every subsequent stage in the development process.

For these reasons, the choice of a school site requires careful study—thorough and objective evaluation. Much thought should be given to the basic principles involved in good site selection.

These principles, when studied in the light of their relation to the local situation, should provide a basis for the objective selection of the best site available. Undue consideration given to the value or acquisition cost of a school site can be , and often has proved to be false economy.

Criteria for Selection of School Sites

Size:

The acreage meets the minimum requirements of the State Board of Education.

Elementary Schools - five acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.
Middle Schools - 12 acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE.
High Schools - 20 acres plus one acre for each 100 students in FTE.

In highly developed areas deviations from minimum acreage may be made by the site approval committee, and considered appropriate.

Although minimum acreages are established, large acreages are highly desirable. Also, those responsible for selecting sites must remain aware of development limitations imposed by certain physical factors of the acreage being considered.

The size of the school may not be the only criterion affecting site size. The possibility of expansion, anticipated community use of the school or area and the school program are other factors to consider.

Utilities:

Utilities essential to the operation of a modern school plant must be available.

Electricity and telephone services are essential to the operation of a school plant and must be accessible to the proposed site.

The desirability of **public water and sewage service** to a school site cannot be overemphasized. The cost of installing private systems, along with the continuing maintenance costs, plus environmental considerations all but eliminate consideration of private installations. Only in cases of overriding circumstances will site approval be granted at locations which cannot be served by public sewage systems.

Safety Hazards:

The school site should be free of conditions and installations which endanger the life, safety and health of children. No area should be considered for a school site when any part of the area is traversed by high-tension lines, high-pressure oil or gas lines, railroads or other hazardous installations or conditions.

No area should be considered for a school site if it is adjacent to an airport, or lies in the final approach or departure pattern of aircraft. The site should be a reasonably safe distance from the flight pattern to avoid the danger of falling aircraft. Also the site should be far enough from airports and flight patterns to offer reasonable protection from interfering noise levels.

School sites should be a reasonable distance from lakes and streams which, due to depth or other conditions, could be considered unsafe to children. Sites adjacent to heavily traveled streets and highways should be avoided. Also, school sites in locations subject to industrial pollution should be avoided. The State Department of Education reserves the right to require a feasibility/risk management study.

Environmental Factors:

The school site should possess physically desirable characteristics and be located so surrounding areas reflect characteristics conducive to the development of attitudes and responses in children considered to be socially, culturally and educationally desirable.

The selection of a school site in an area zoned for commercial or industrial development should be avoided. The school location should be insulated from business and industrial development. The routes to and from the school site should not expose children to hazardous environmental materials or safety hazards.

The location of a school site should be acceptable to the school patronage community from the standpoint of general environmental surroundings and vehicular accessibility.

Geographical and Related Factors:

The school site should provide convenient accessibility, be supportive to an efficient transportation system, be accessible to community services needed by the school and be appropriately located with respect to other schools and the population to be served.

All school site approvals must be accompanied by a letter of assurance that the site is not in a flood plain or the Coastal High Hazard Area. This letter of assurance must be from the Flood Plain Management Coordinator of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

To obtain the letter of assurance, write the Flood Plain Management Coordinator, Georgia Department of natural Resources and enclose a county highway map, indicating the school location. The letter should describe briefly the location, giving information such as the direction from a particular point (a town or city), distance, name of roads or highway numbers and other appropriate location description and acreage. The Flood Plain Management Coordinator's address is:

Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Floodplain Management Office
7 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive
Suite 440
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Site Development:

The physical characteristics of the school site should be such that the cost of grading, drainage and development will be relatively low.

The evaluation of a site as it relates to physical development is a technical task, requiring the knowledge and experience of a qualified professional. The investment required to obtain a professional evaluation for physical development may result in considerable future savings.